

The Bishop of London was right when he said that Lutheranism was adding new arms to the Wycliffites. Although in the country districts, East Anglia, Berks, and Bucks, the old Lollard congregations were in 1521 still untouched by German influence, Lutheran books were in that very year introduced into Oxford, with the result that 'divers of that University were infected with the heresies' of the German.<sup>1</sup> Although the new doctrines scarcely differed at all in essentials from Lollardy, they appealed better to the politician and the man of learning. The orthodox instantly took alarm. King Henry wrote his famous Defence of the Faith, and Cardinal Wolsey in that same year issued orders to seize all Lutheran books. Here, then, ends the history of Lollardy proper, not because it is extinguished but because it is merged in another party. The societies of poor men, who met to read the Gospel and Wycliffe's 'Wicket' by night, suddenly finding Europe convulsed by their ideas, seeing their beliefs adopted by the learned and the powerful, joyfully surrendered themselves to the great new movement, for which they had been waiting in the dark years so faithfully and so long.

But the importance of Lollardy cannot be estimated merely by the number of ready recruits for the battle of the Reformation which it supplied from its own ranks. The effect produced on ordinary men who were no Lollards cannot, unfortunately, be determined by historical analysis. But a consideration of human nature, and more especially of the English nature, would lead to the supposition that throughout this long period there were many impressed without being convinced, or convinced without being ready to act on their conviction. Between the Lollard and the high Catholic position, between the exhortations of the heretic pulpit and the directions of the orthodox confessional, there were many shades of opinion and many houses of rest, in which our ancestors' minds must have loved to lodge, if they at all resembled our own. Although the Church authorities in the fifteenth century grew more rather than less intolerant by force of revulsion from Lollardy, the ordinary layman began

<sup>1</sup> Letter of Archbishop Warham to Cardinal Wolsey, see p. 4, *Lutheran Movement in England* Jacobs.